DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 393 307 FL 023 639

AUTHOR Cohen, Andrew D.
TITLE Second Language Learning and Use Strategies: Clarifying the Issues. Research Report. Revised Version.
INSTITUTION Minnesota Univ., Minneapolis. Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Jan 95
NOTE 20p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; *Cognitive Style; Communication Skills; Curriculum Design; Educational Strategies; Higher Education; Language Proficiency; Language Usage; *Learning Strategies; *Metacognition; Personality Traits; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; *Second Languages

ABSTRACT

The discussion presented here is intended to clarify terminology and concepts of learning strategies and language use strategies for second languages. It first provides working definitions for these terms: language learning and use strategies; language use strategies; language performance strategies; communication strategies; cognitive strategies; metacognitive strategies; and affective strategies. It then considers five issues in the language learning strategies field: (1) the distinction between the term "strategy" and other terminology (substrategies, techniques, tactics); (2) whether learning strategies must be conscious in order to be referred to as strategies; (3) criteria for classifying language learning and use strategies; (4) a broadening of the concept of strategic competence; and (5) the linking of learning strategies to learning styles and other personality-related variables. Finally, an example is offered of how these issues are dealt with in a program of strategy-based instruction at the university level. Contains 32 references. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 393 307

THE CENTER FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Karin E. Larson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND USE STRATEGIES: CLARIFYING THE ISSUES

ANDREW D. COHEN

NATIONAL LANGUAGE RESOURCE CENTER

CENTER FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

FL023639

Research Report
Revised Version
January 1995

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CENTER FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
Institute of International Studies and Programs

Suite 111, UTEC, 1313 5th Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55414
Telephone: (612) 627-1870
Fax: (612) 627-1875
E-mail: carla@maroon.tc.umn.edu

This research was made possible by U.S. Dept. of Education National Language Resource Center funding.

INTRODUCTION

This paper was written in response to a request to help provide clarification for a field that has become characterized by a plethora of terminology and perhaps a dearth of clear understandings as to what the terms actually refer to and how to operationalize them in foreign language instruction. The effort was assisted by the fact that the present author had had the benefit of co-authoring a "strategies concepts" paper with Rebecca Oxford several years before (Oxford & Cohen 1993), and so many of the problematic issues had already been aired.

The current paper will begin by providing working definitions for language learning and use strategy terminology. It then will then consider five problematic issues that have arisen in the language learning strategy field: the distinction between the term **strategy** and other terms, the issue of whether learning strategies need to be conscious in order to be referred to as strategies, criteria for classifying language learning and use strategies, a broadening of the concept of **strategic competence**, and the linking of learning strategies to learning styles and other personality-related variables. Finally, an example will be given of how these problematic issues are dealt with in a program of strategy-based instruction at the university level.

DEFINING "SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING AND USE STRATEGIES"

The following represents a broad definition of **second language learning and use strategies**: the steps or actions selected by learners either to improve the *learning* of a second language, the *use* of it, or both. **Language use strategies**, in turn, include both **language performance strategies** and **communication strategies**. What makes the definition for language learning and use strategies broad is that it encompasses those actions that are clearly aimed at language learning, as well as those that may well lead to learning but which do not ostensibly have learning as their primary goal.[2] Let us now fine-tune our definition by looking in turn the types of strategies encompassed in it.

Language learning strategies have an explicit goal of assisting learners in improving their knowledge of a target language. **Language performance strategies** include cognitive processing strategies, strategies for solidifying newly acquired language patterns (such as through form-focused practice), and strategies for determining the amount of cognitive energy to expend.[3] Some language performance strategies reflect efforts at simplification, while others reflect complexification (e.g., circumlocutions used because the finely-tuned vocabulary is lacking). Both cases represent an attempt to compensate for gaps in target language knowledge. Still other such strategies are aimed at rehearsing language structures. **Communication** strategies constitute another subset of language use strategies, with the focus on getting a message across. Such strategies may or may not have any impact on learning. For example, learners may use some new lexical item to communicate a thought in class without any intention of trying to learn the word, or to the contrary may communicate through that new word expressly in order to promote their learning of it.

Language learning and use strategies can be further differentiated according to whether they are cognitive, metacognitive, affective, or social (Chamot 1987, Oxford 1990). **Cognitive**

strategies usually involve both the identification, retention, storage, or retrieval of words, phrases, and other elements of the second language. **Metacognitive** strategies deal with pre-assessment and pre-planning, on-line planning and evaluation, and post-evaluation of language learning activities, and language use events.[4] Such strategies allow learners to control their own cognition by coordinating the planning, organizing, and evaluating of the learning process. **Affective** strategies serve to regulate emotions, motivation, and attitudes (e.g., strategies for reduction of anxiety and for self-encouragement). **Social** strategies include the actions which learners choose to take in order to interact with other learners and with native speakers (e.g., asking questions for clarification and cooperating with others).

TERMINOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL ISSUES IN NEED OF CLARIFICATION

Having considered working definitions for language learning strategy terminology, let us now consider five problematic issues that have arisen in the learning strategy field and suggest means for dealing with each one.[5]

1) The Distinction Among Strategies, Substrategies, Techniques, and Tactics

The first issue concerns a distinction made between **strategy**, **substrategy**, **techniques**, and **tactics**, and the lack of clarity that this distinction has generated in the research literature. The term **strategies** has, in fact, been used to refer both to general approaches and to specific actions or techniques used to learn a second language. For example, a general approach could be that of forming concepts and hypotheses about how the target language works. A more specific strategy could be that of improving reading skill in the new language. Among the strategies aimed at improving reading could be the use of coherence-detecting strategies. A more specific strategy could entail making use of summaries in order to comprehend reading passages. A more specific strategy still could be that of indicating that the summaries are to be learner-generated (rather than supplied by the author). An even more specific strategy could stipulate that ongoing summaries be written in the margin in telegraphic form.

So the issue is one of how to refer to these various actions. The literature includes the terms **strategy**, **technique** (Stern 1983), **tactic** (Seliger 1984), and **move** (Sarig 1987), among other terms, and also includes the split between **macro-** and **micro-**strategies and tactics (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991). A solution to the problem would be to refer to all of these simply as **strategies**, while still acknowledging that there is a continuum from the broadest categories to the most specific or low-level. While learners will want to know the general rubrics for strategies that they use, for them the most important thing may be to see lists of suggested strategies that are specific enough so that they are readily operationalizable (such as the most specific ones for summarizing in reading, mentioned above).

2) **Learning Strategies as Conscious or Unconscious**

The second problematic issue pertains to the absence of consensus as to whether strategies need to be **conscious** in order for them to be considered strategies. A recent discussion of the role of consciousness in second language learning would suggest terminology that may be appropriate for the issue of awareness in using language learning strategies, even though the terms were meant to refer to attention to language material and not to language strategies.. Drawing on Schmidt (1994), we could stipulate that language learning strategies are either within the **focal attention** of the learners or within their **peripheral attention**, in that they can identify them if asked about what they have just done or thought. If a learner's behavior is totally unconscious so that the given learner is not able to identify any strategies associated with it, then the behavior would simply be referred to as a **process**, not a **strategy**. For example, a learner may use the behavior of skimming a portion of text in order to avoid a lengthy illustration. If the learner is at all conscious (even if peripherally) as to why the skip is taking place, then it would be a strategy. Ellis (1994) points out that if strategies are proceduralized until a stage where the learner is no longer conscious of employing them, they are no longer accessible for description though verbal report by the learners and thus lose their significance as strategies. This approach to dealing with strategies has appeal for researchers who conduct empirical research on strategies in order to arrive at descriptions to be used in strategy-based instruction.

3) **Differing Criteria for Classifying Language Learning Strategies**

The third problem results from the fact that different criteria are used to classify language learning strategies, causing inconsistencies and mismatches across existing taxonomies and other categorizations. As we indicated in the above definitions, some strategies contribute directly to learning (e.g., memorization strategies for learning vocabulary items or grammatical structures), while other strategies have as their main goal that of using the language (e.g., verifying thaf the intended meaning was conveyed). Some strategies are behavioral and can be directly observed (e.g., asking a question for clarification), others are mental and behavioral but not easily observable (e.g., paraphrasing), while others are just mental (e.g., making mental translations for clarification while reading) and must be accessed through other means, such as through verbal report. Strategy frameworks have also been developed on the basis of degree of explicitness of knowledge and the kind of knowledge (e.g., linguistic vs. world knowledge, and form-focused vs. meaning-focused knowledge) (Bialystok 1978, Ellis 1986).

In addition, strategies are sometimes labeled as belonging to "successful" or "unsuccessful" learners, when, in fact, the effectiveness of a strategy may depend largely on the characteristics of the given learner, the given language structure(s), the given context, or the interaction of these. Moreover, the very same learner may find that a given reading strategy (such as writing ongoing, marginal summaries while reading a text) works very well for the fifth paragraph of a given text but not for the sixth. The difficulty could result from the learner's lack of vocabulary or grammatical knowledge, from the fact that the material is summarizer-unfriendly in that paragraph, from some distraction in the environment where the reading is going on (the

classroom, the home, the library, etc.), or from some other cause.

Strategies have also been distinguished from each other according to whether they are cognitive, metacognitive, affective, or social (as defined above). The problem is that the distinctions are not so clear-cut. In other words, the same strategy of ongoing text summarization may be interpretable as either cognitive or metacognitive. It might not be possible to neatly draw the line between **metacognitive** strategies aimed at planning a summary and evaluating the results both while in the process of constructing the marginal entry and after finishing the writing of it, and **cognitive** strategies involving the reconceptualization of a paragraph at a higher level of abstraction. In fact, both types of strategies may well be utilized. Delineating whether the strategy is one or the other is what is problematic. In fact, the same strategy may function at different levels of abstraction. For instance, skipping an example in the text so as not to lose the train of thought may reflect a metacognitive strategy (i.e., part of a conscious plan to not get distracted by detail) and also a cognitive strategy to avoid material that would not assist in generating a gist statement.

So given these dichotomies and continua in the classification of learning strategies (as well as others not mentioned here), what solution might there be for the practitioners and researchers? Ellis (1994) takes the somewhat upbeat attitude that "considerable progress has been made in classifying learning strategies...from the early beginnings when researchers did little more than list strategies" (p. 539). He notes that there are now comprehensive, multi-levelled, and theoretically-motivated taxonomies (e.g., O'Malley & Chamot 1990, Oxford 1990, and Wenden 1991). Ellis notes that high inference is still called for in order to interpret which strategy is being used when, and that strategies belonging to one type frequently vary on a number of dimensions such as specificity (as illustrated above with the example of summarizing) and the extent to which they are observable.

It would seem that what is called for on the part of researchers and developers of materials for strategies instruction is greater care in specifying strategies on the dimensions that are likely to be relevant for the given learners in the given context. It would also seem advisable to make an effort to identify non-observable strategy use through various research methods, such as through learning strategy interviews and written surveys, observation, verbal report, diaries and dialog journals, recollective studies, and computer tracking (Cohen & Scott, forthcoming). At the present time, no single assessment method prevails in the field. Certain research methods (e.g., surveys and observations) are well established but have failed in some cases to generate useful data on learners' strategy use. Other methods (e.g., computer tracking[6]) are emerging as new research tools, but their potential has not yet been fully explored by researchers. While the use of verbal report as a research tool has come under criticism, it nonetheless has provided numerous insights about the strategies used before, during, and after tasks involving language learning and language use.

4) Broadening the Concept of Strategic Competence

A fourth issue involves the fact that the term **strategic competence** has broadened well beyond its original meaning. While early reference to strategic competence as a component of communicative language use (Canale & Swain 1980, Canale 1983) put the emphasis on **compensatory strategies** (i.e., strategies used to compensate or remediate for a lack in some language area), Bachman (1990) provided a broader theoretical model for viewing strategic competence. In his model, there is an **assessment** component whereby the speakers (listeners, readers, or writers[7]) set communicative goals, a **planning** component whereby the they retrieve the relevant items from their language competence and plan their use, and an **execution** component whereby they implement the plan. After finishing the activity, the speakers may again perform an assessment to evaluate the extent to which the communicative goal was achieved.

Within this broader framework, it may still be the case that a fair number of strategies are, in fact, compensatory. Nonnative speakers (and even some native speakers in some situations) may omit material because they do not know it when put on the spot, or may produce different material from what they would like to with the hope that it will be acceptable in the given context. They may use lexical avoidance, simplification, or approximation when the exact word escapes them under pressure or possibly because they simply do not know the word that well or at all. Yet much of the strategic behavior that falls under the rubric of strategic competence in Bachman's model is not compensatory: for instance, metacognitive strategies for assessing the language needed to perform the given task, cognitive strategies for selecting appropriate language structures (when the necessary or desired structures **are**, in fact, available to the nonnative), strategies for executing the plan, and finally post-task assessment strategies.

As in the case of any theoretical model, nonnatives may make differential use of the components of this model when performing specific communicative tasks. For example, there are those who frequently or at times do not assess the situation before engaging in communication, and because of this they may violate certain sociocultural conventions. Likewise, there are nonnative speakers who plan out the specifics of their utterances before producing them, while others just start talking immediately with the intention of working things out on an on-line basis. Recent research involving the use of verbal report directly after the performance of oral role-play interaction obtained data regarding the extent of strategic assessment and planning actually taking place before the execution of three speech acts--apologies, complaints, and requests (Cohen & Olshtain 1993). In that study it was found that half of the time the nonnative adult speakers conducted only a general assessment of the utterances called for in the situation without planning specific vocabulary and grammatical structures.

The fact that the concept of strategic competence has been broadened to encompass not only compensatory but also non-compensatory behaviors clearly suggests that the previous definition was too restrictive. It is now important to conduct more empirical studies to determine the extent to which such models actually reflect the strategic behavior of the nonnatives they are intended to describe.

5) **Linking Learning Strategies to Learning Styles and Other Personality-Related Variables**

The fifth, and final problematic issue involves what is perceived by some as an inadequate linking of learning strategies and learning styles in the language learning field. Learning strategies do not operate by themselves, but rather are directly tied to the learner's underlying learning styles (i.e., general approaches to learning) and other personality-related variables (such as anxiety and self-concept) in the learner (Brown 1991). They are also related to demographic factors like sex, age, and ethnic differences (Politzer 1983, Oxford 1989). Schmeck (1988) underscores the need to understand learning strategies in the context of **learning styles**, which he defines as the expression of personality specifically in the learning situation. Schmeck also exhorts researchers to view learning styles and learning strategies in the context of general personality factors such as the following: introversion/extroversion, reflectiveness/impulsiveness, field independence/dependence, self-confidence, self-concept, self-efficacy, creativity, anxiety, and motivation (intrinsic/extrinsic) (Oxford & Cohen 1992). According to Schmeck, a learning strategy disembedded from personality-related factors is "only a short-term prop for learning" (p. 179).

Many language learning strategy studies over the last decade have looked at cognitive and metacognitive strategy use but have failed to gather, analyze, or report personality-related, social, and demographic information about the subjects. Factors such as motivation, beliefs, attitudes, anxiety, learning style, world knowledge, sex, and ethnicity have received lesser emphasis (Oxford & Cohen 1992). The O'Malley and Chamot (1990) taxonomy focused on cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and only touched the surface of social and especially affective strategies. Likewise, affective aspects of language learning were generally left out of the Faerch and Kasper (1983) taxonomy. The situation has improved somewhat through the **personological** work of some strategy investigators (Ely 1989, Ehrman & Oxford 1990, Galloway & Labarca 1991). But there is need for more routine collection of information on sex, ethnicity, age, degree of language learning experience, world knowledge, motivation, anxiety, beliefs, attitudes, and learning style--along with data on the learning environment and teacher variables.

DEALING WITH THE PROBLEMATIC ISSUES IN A STRATEGY-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

In this last section, an example is given of how the problematic issues are dealt with in a program of strategy-based instruction at the university level. The current program of learning strategy instruction, evaluation, and research at the University of Minnesota is utilized for the purposes of illustration. At present, there are numerous means available for strategy instruction, such as general study skills courses, peer tutoring, research-oriented training, videotaped mini-courses, awareness training, strategy workshops, insertion of strategies into language textbooks, and integration of strategies into foreign language instruction (Weaver & Cohen, in press). Since past experience at the University of Minnesota and elsewhere had indicated that various short-term interventions had only short-term effects at best, it was determined that the most effect

program would most likely be one of strategy-based instruction--that is, one that began with intensive teacher development and then relied on the teachers to provide strategy awareness to their learners as a regular feature of their instruction.

A thirty-hour seminar, entitled "Strategies-Based Foreign Language Learning," was created at the University of Minnesota for teachers from different foreign language programs. The seminar focuses on training the participating teachers in how to create their own strategy-based instructional materials.[8] The teachers are thus responsible for applying the strategies to their own curricular needs, and, when possible, are paired with teachers from their own language department to share lesson plan ideas. For the less commonly taught languages (e.g., Hebrew, Hindi, Irish, Norwegian, and Portuguese[9]), the teachers are asked to form cross-language strategy support teams. After the teachers have had opportunities to create strategy-based materials and to practice integrating strategies into typical language learning tasks, they present micro-teaching strategy/language sessions to their peers in order to practice strategy instruction techniques before introducing the activities into their own classrooms. The sessions are videotaped and critiqued by all the participants. Fourteen teachers representing nine languages participated in the first seminar offered in the Spring Quarter, 1994.[10]

1) Using the Term *Strategy*

Strategy-based instruction refers to explicit classroom instruction directed at learners regarding their language learning and use strategies, and provided alongside instruction in the foreign language itself. The goal of strategy-based instruction is to help second language students become more aware of the ways in which they learn most effectively, ways in which they can enhance their own comprehension and production of the target language, and ways in which they can continue learning after leaving the classroom. A strategy is considered to be "effective" if it provides positive support to the students in their effort to learn the language or to communicate through its use. For the purposes of the teacher seminars in strategy-based instruction, the term **strategy** has not been distinguished from **substrategy, technique, tactic**, or any other terms, even though a good deal of subcategorizing has taken place.

For example, a classification scheme for speaking strategies was developed for an experimental treatment administered by three of the teachers who completed the seminar on strategy-based instruction--two intermediate French teachers and one intermediate Norwegian teacher (Cohen, Li, & Weaver, in preparation). The details of the experiment appear below. The classification included pre-speaking, speaking, and post-speaking strategies (Alcaya, Lybeck, & Mougel 1994; see Appendix). Just taking the before-speaking strategies, it is noted that there are four levels of specificity. The first is the category of pre-speaking strategies, the most general category. Then this category is subdivided into strategies for lowering anxiety (e.g., relaxation techniques and positive self-talk) and those for preparing and planning--for example, identifying the goal and purpose of the task, activating background knowledge, predicting what is going to happen, and planning possible responses. The prediction and planning strategies were further subdivided, with seven prediction strategies and six planning strategies. The purpose of this

example is to show that during efforts to make strategy options explicit, the metalinguistic labels and sub-labels are less important than the descriptive labels for each level of specificity. These descriptive labels take much time and thought to develop adequately, and depend highly on empirical investigations for their authenticity and applicability to the given language tasks.

2) **Conscious Use of Strategies**

In this program, an effort was made to describe the actual strategies that the French and Norwegian intermediate learners in both the experimental and control classrooms utilized in performing speaking tasks. Thus, the focus was exclusively on the strategies that would be within the students' sphere of consciousness, whether receiving peripheral or focal attention from the student at the time. Thus, the approach concurred with Ellis' (1994) position that strategies no longer accessible for description though verbal report by the learner lose their significance as strategies. In order to describe how the experimental and control students' awareness of their strategy use was investigated, it is necessary to describe the study in a somewhat more detailed fashion. So what follows is a brief description of the ongoing experiment on Strategy-Based Speaking Instruction:

Sample: The sample consisted of students from six sections of foreign language classes (four French sections and two Norwegian sections) at the University of Minnesota. Three of the six teachers working with these sections were chosen from the Spring Quarter 1994 seminar entitled "Learner Training in Foreign Language Learning Strategies." Their sections constituted the experimental group. The teachers of the other three groups did not receive any special instruction, and their sections comprised the comparison group. Three students were selected from each of the six sections to provide additional data in the form of verbal report protocols regarding their strategy use and language learning (see below). These eighteen students represented three different levels of speaking ability in their respective classes, as determined by their teachers.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedures

Treatment: The students in the experimental group received instruction in language learning strategies throughout the 10-week Fall Quarter 1994. Rather than being presented as a separate learning task, the strategy-based instruction was incorporated into regular classroom learning activities. Both the comparison group and experimental groups followed the syllabus of their respective departments, French and Norwegian. The learners received instruction in the full range of second language learning strategies, but the teacher focused on how those strategies could be applied to speaking. This focus was explicit in that the teachers identified the strategy and modeled its use for the students rather than implicitly embedding it into some classroom activity. Implicit embedding has tended to be the approach used more traditionally and one that has not necessarily engendered transfer on the students' part to other language learning or use contexts.

Pre-Treatment Questionnaire: During the first week of class, all subjects completed the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (Oxford 1990), and a background questionnaire. The background questionnaire covered the following: previous second-language study; learning preferences; reasons for studying the target language; contact with native speakers--how, where, and why they had contact; visits to the target culture (for work, vacation, etc.); current work schedule (full-time/part-time/not working); grade in previous course in the target language, GPA in their major and in general; and gender. Also, the students were asked why they had chosen to be in a particular section of French or Norwegian.

The Speaking Test Battery, Strategy Checklist, and Verbal Report: A Speaking Task Battery was designed that consisted of a series of speaking tasks that were similar to regular classroom activities. A task that required students to make use of previously studied material (e.g., the Self-Description task, below) was expected to elicit vocabulary and grammar retrieval strategies. A task that called upon the students to learn new material (e.g., the Story Retelling task, below) was expected to elicit learning strategies. Across all tasks, it was assumed that if students were put in a situation where they did not have all of the linguistic ability to easily complete the task, they might be expected to make use of communication strategies.

After each of the three tasks enumerated below, there were three checklists of strategies, with the list varying according to the nature of the task. Respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point scale the extent to which they used each of the strategies on the list--before, during, or after completing the task respectively.

The following were the three speaking tasks in the battery:

Self-Description: In this task, the students were prompted by a hypothetical situation where a person was asked to pick up someone (a native speaker of French/Norwegian who does not speak English) in the airport. The students were asked to describe themselves in the target language in order for the visitor to recognize them. This topic was based on content the students had covered in their classes, so it was administered first to help put them at ease. The strategy checklists included items dealing with rehearsal, planning, accessing known material, and positive self-talk, among other things. If the students lacked or were uncertain of vocabulary for the task, then the task may have involved communication strategies--namely, where students were trying to use their limited linguistic skills to say something they did not know how to say in precise terms.

Story Retelling: In this task, the students were given a reading passage adapted from French/Norwegian folklore with some unfamiliar words or phrases. A glossary of the words and phrases that might be unfamiliar to the students was provided on the task sheet in order to ensure that the task was more one of learning information to talk about

rather than simply being a reading comprehension exercise.[11] After reading the text, the students were asked to summarize the story orally, referring back as little as possible to the written text. For this task, the checklists included strategies such as: inferencing, memorization or repetition for remembering words/phrases, and simplification.

Describing One's Favorite City: The students were given five minutes to prepare a brief talk on their favorite city. A list of vocabulary was included to stimulate the students' production. The students' task was to describe a favorite city and give the reason why the city would be chosen. Again, after completing the task, the respondents were asked to complete the three corresponding strategy checklists, with the listed strategies similar to those for the other tasks but occasionally reflecting strategies relevant only to that task.

All subjects from the experimental and comparison groups were asked to complete the same three speaking tasks on a pre-posttest basis, to determine whether there were gains in their speaking ability. The data were collected during non-classroom hours due to constraints on class time. The data were collected in a language laboratory in a semi-direct fashion, with respondents audio-taping their responses at their individual consoles. They were also asked to fill in a post-task checklist immediately following each task, to elicit data on strategy use. The data on the Speaking Task Battery was administered at the beginning of the quarter and at the end.

Verbal Report

These tasks had an extra feature for the subsample of eighteen learners representing three learners (high, medium, and low proficiency) from each of the classes. Those learners also were asked to give their reasons for the frequency-of-use rating that they assigned each strategy on the checklists (1 to 5). They provided this input as verbal report while they were filling out the checklists. This involved removing the tape that they taped their speaking tasks on and putting in a separate tape just for the verbal report. The students were given a mini-training in how to provide verbal report data while performing the checklist tasks. As part of this training, they heard an audiotape of two respondents as they themselves completed the task.

To reiterate what was said at the beginning of this section on consciousness, the emphasis in this study was on those strategies that could be explicitly identified by experimental and control subjects before, during, and after the three speaking tasks that they were asked to perform. While the data will be analyzed in the next few weeks, the current design is expected to yield more finely-tuned descriptions of the strategies used in speaking tasks than have been obtained from previous studies. The verbal report data which were collected from the subset of 18 learners should provide information not only on the strategies selected for the given tasks, but also concerning the rationale for selecting a given strategy.

3) Classifying the Strategies

The current seminar and research study received direct input from Oxford and from Chamot, and the general strategy categorization utilized reflected a combination of the taxonomy upon which Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was based and that used by Chamot in her research. Both the strategies used in explicit training and those assessed through the checklists combined both metacognitive, cognitive, affective, and social strategies; both observable and mental strategies; and a combination of learning and use strategies. The three selected tasks were purposely designed so as to elicit somewhat different kinds of strategies, and the checklists accompanying the different tasks were thus somewhat different from one another.

4) The Broader Concept of Strategic Competence

The seminar and research reside squarely within the broadened concept of strategic competence. Just as this framework calls for describing how nonnative users of a language assess what they need to do in a given task, plan for specific action they will take, execute their plan, and then assess their success at the task, so the current research design purposely focused on obtaining descriptions of all four of these stages through the checklists that the respondents were asked to fill out immediately following the completion of each task.

5) Linking Strategies to Learning Styles and Other Personality-related Variables

As indicated in the above description of the study, the students were asked questions about their learning preferences, their reasons for studying the target language, and a series of demographic questions. Statistical measures will be used to relate the use of particular strategies to these other variables in order to see the extent to which strategy use is conditioned by personal variables.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has provided working definitions of second language learning and language use terminology, has considered five problematic issues relating to the conceptualization and use of these terms, and has briefly demonstrated ways that one program for strategy-based instruction has dealt with these issues in the field.

While the terminological issues are in no way settled, there does appear to be a greater movement towards consensus. The growing demand for operationalizing the strategy taxonomies for the purpose of teacher and learner seminars has put a premium on generating strategy lists that

are comprehensive, comprehensible, and functional. As more field work takes place, lists such as that of speaking strategies in this paper will become far more common. Already books are beginning to appear which take one of the skill areas, such as listening (see Mendelsohn 1994), and develop it fully at both a theoretical and a practical level. This is a most promising trend at a time when language learning and use strategies can have a major role in helping to shift the responsibility for learning off of the shoulders of the teachers and on to those of the learners.

NOTES

1. Paper originally prepared for presentation at the Symposium on Strategies of Language Learning and Use, Seville, Spain, December 13-16, 1994, and revised based on feedback at the symposium.

2. See Ellis (1994; Ch. 12) for a recent review of learning strategy terminology.

3. The term *language performance strategies* was supplied by Elaine Tarone (Personal Communication, November 28, 1994) and is intended to replace the term *production strategies* which she introduced some years ago (Tarone 1981).

4. In language use situations, there may be no intention to communicate, such as in mechanical drills.

5. This discussion of the five problematic issues is based in part on Oxford & Cohen, 1992. For the most part, when reference is made to *language learning strategies* without mention of *language use strategies*, the latter is implied as well.

6. Tracking programs can unobtrusively create a log of learners' uses for various resource functions contained within the computerized language program, whether in writing tasks (e.g., word processing, filling out forms, etc.), reading tasks (a summarization exercise, a cloze task, a multiple-choice reading comprehension task), or grammar drills.

7. Whereas strategic competence was initially linked primarily to speaking, researchers have expanded its coverage to include listening (Tarone & Yule 1989), reading, and writing (Oxford 1990) as well.

8. This seminar is being funded through a National Language Resource Center grant awarded by the Center for International Education, U.S. Office of Education.

9. What is deemed a less commonly taught language (LCTL) varies from context to context. So whereas Portuguese may be a LCTL in Minnesota, it would probably be a most commonly taught language in parts of Spain.

10. Another seminar will be offered in Winter Quarter, 1995, again for University of Minnesota teachers, and then in the Spring Quarter, the seminar will be open to language teachers from colleges throughout the Twin Cities area. Then in the summer of 1996, the seminar will be offered to high school teachers.

11. For several respondents, the exercise was still a reading comprehension task to a greater or lesser degree. Hence, future such tasks will probably involve the retelling of a film rather than a text.

REFERENCES CITED

Alcaya, C., Lybeck, K., & Mougel, P. 1994. Speaking strategies: A list compiled by teachers in the Experimental Sections of the Speaking Strategies Experiment. Unpublished document, National Language Resource Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Bachman, L.F. 1990. *Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing.* Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Bialystok, E. 1978. A theoretical model of second language learning. *Language Learning, Vol. 28*: 69-83.

Brown, H.D. 1991. *Breaking the Language Barrier*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Canale, M. 1983. On some dimensions of language proficiency. In J.W. Oller, Jr. (Ed.), *Issues in Language Testing Research*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 333-342.

Canale, M. & Swain, M. 1980. Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics, Vol. 1*: 1-47.

Chamot, A.U. (1987). The learning strategies of ESL students. In A. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner Strategies in Language Learning.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Cohen, A.D. & Olshtain, E. 1993. The production of speech acts by EFL learners. *TESOL Quarterly, Vol. 27/1*: 33-56.

Cohen, A.D. & Scott, K. Forthcoming. Approaches to assessing language learning strategies. In R.L. Oxford & B.L. Leaver (Eds.), *Learner Awareness of Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cohen, A.D., Li, Tao-yuan, & Weaver, S.J. In preparation. *Strategies-Based Speaking Instruction: Research report*. Minneapolis: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota.

Ehrman, M. & Oxford, R.L. 1990. Adult language learning styles and strategies in an intensive training setting. *Modern Language Journal, Vol. 74*: 311-327.

Ellis, R. 1986. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. 1994. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ely, C. 1989. Tolerance of ambiguity and use of second language learning strategies. *Foreign Language Annals, Vol. 22/5*: 437-445.

Faerch, C. & Kasper, G. 1983. Procedural knowledge as a component of foreign language learners' communicative competence. In H. Boete & W. Herrlitz (Eds.), *Kommunication im (Sprach-) Unterricht*. Utrecht: Rijksuniversiteik.

Galloway, V. & Labarca, A. 1991. From student to learner: Style, process, and strategy. In D.W. Birckbichler (Ed.), *New Perspective and New Directions in Foreign Language Education*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company, 111-158.

Larsen-Freeman, D. & Long, M. 1991. *Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research*. London: Longman.

Mendelsohn, D.J. 1994. *Learning to Listen: A strategy-based approach for the second-language learner*. San Diego: Dominie Press.

O'Malley, J.M. & Chamot, A.U. 1990. *Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford, R.L. 1989. Use of language learning strategies: A synthesis of studies with implications

for strategy training. *System, Vol. 17/2*: 235-247.

Oxford, R. L. 1990. *Language Learning Strategies: What every teacher should know*. New York: Newbury House/Harper Collins.

Oxford, R.L. & Cohen, A.D. 1992. Language learning strategies: Crucial issues of concept and classification. *Applied Language Learning, Vol. 3/1-2*: 1-35.

Politzer, R.L. 1983. An exploratory study of self-reported language learning behaviors and their relation to achievement. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, Vol. 6/1*: 54-65.

Sarig, G. (1984). High-level reading in the first and in the foreign languages: Some comparative process data. In J. Devine, P.L. Carrell, & D.E. Eskey (Eds.), *Research in Reading in English as a Second Language*. Washington, D.C.: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 105-120.

Schmeck, R. 1988. Individual differences and learning strategies. In C. Weinstein, E. Goetz, & P. Alexander (Eds.), *Learning and Study Strategies*. N.Y.: Academic Press, 171-191.

Schmidt, R. 1994. Deconstructing consciousness in search of useful definitions for applied linguistics. *AILA Review, Vol. 11*: 11-16.

Seliger, H. 1984. Processing univerals in second language acquisition. In F. Eckman, L. Bell, & D. Nelson (Eds.), *Universals of Second Language Acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 36-47.

Stern, H. 1983. *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tarone, E. 1981. Some thoughts on the notion of communication stratetgy. *TESOL Quarterly, Vol. 15/3*: 285-295.

Tarone, E. & Yule, G. 1989. *Focus on the Language Learner*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Weaver, S.J. & Cohen, A.D. In press. Making learning strategy instruction a reality in the foreign language curriculum. In C. Klee (Ed.), *Faces in a Crowd: The individual learner in multisection courses*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Wenden, A. 1991. *Learner Strategies for Learner Autonomy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

APPENDIX: SPEAKING STRATEGIES

[Compiled by C. Alcaya, K. Lybeck, & P. Mougel, teachers in the experimental sections of the Speaking Strategies Experiment, NLRC/CARLA, Univ. of Minnesota, November 1994]

1) Before You Speak

lower your anxiety

- deep breathing
- positive self-talk
- visualize yourself succeeding
- relaxation techniques
- feel prepared
- other anxiety-lowering techniques?

prepare and plan

- Identify the goal and purpose of the task: what is it you are to learn/ demonstrate in this exercise?
- Ask for clarification of the task if you are unsure of its goal, purpose, or how you are to do it.
- Activate background knowledge; what do you already know about this situation/task?
- Relate the task to a similar situation; make associations.
- Predict what is going to happen:
  - Predict the vocabulary you will need. Make word maps, groupings.
  - Think of how you might circumlocute for vocabulary you do not know. Think of synonyms, antonyms, explanations, or nonverbal communication that can substitute.
  - Translate from English to French any words you predict you will need that you do not already know.
  - Predict the structures (grammar) you will need.
  - Review similar tasks in your textbook.
  - Transfer sounds and structures from previously learned material to the new situation.
  - Predict the difficulties you might encounter.
- Plan your responses and contributions:
  - Organize your thoughts.
  - Prepare a general "outline" (use notes, keywords, draw pictures).
  - Predict what the other party is going to say.
  - Rehearse (practice silently, act out in front of a mirror, record yourself and listen).

- Cooperate in all areas if it is a group task.
- Encourage yourself to speak out, even though you might make some mistakes.

2) <u>While You Are Speaking</u>

feeling in control

- Take your emotional temperature. If you find you are tense, try to relax, funnel your energy to your brain rather than your body (laugh, breathe deeply).
- Concentrate on the task, do not let what is going on around you distract you.
- Use your prepared materials (when allowed).
- Ask for clarification ("Is this what I am supposed to do?"), help (ask someone for a word, let others know when you need help), or verification (ask someone to correct pronunciation).
- Delay speaking. It's OK to take time to think out your response.
- Don't give up. Don't let your mistakes stop you. If you talk yourself into a corner or become frustrated, back up, ask for time, and start over in another direction.
- Think in the target language.
- Encourage yourself (use positive self-talk).

be involved in the conversation

- Direct your thoughts away from the situation (e.g., test!) and concentrate on the conversation.
- Listen to your conversation partner. Often you will be able to use the structure or vocabulary they use in your own response.
- Cooperate to negotiate meaning and to complete the task.
- Anticipate what the other person is going to say based on what has been said so far.
- Empathize with your partner. Try to be supportive and helpful.
- Take reasonable risks. Don't guess wildly, but use your good judgment to go ahead and speak when it is appropriate, rather than keeping silent for fear of making a mistake.

monitor your performance

- Monitor your speech by paying attention to your vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation while speaking.
- Self-correct. If you hear yourself making a mistake, back up and fix it.

- Activate your new vocabulary. Try not to rely only on familiar words.
- Imitate the way native speakers talk.
- Compensate by using strategies such as circumlocution , synonyms, guessing which word to use, getting help, using cognates, making up words, using gestures.
- Adjust or approximate your message. If you can't communicate the complexity of your idea, communicate it simply. Through a progression of questions and answers, you are likely to get your point across, rather than shutting down for a lack of ability to relate the first idea.
- Switch (when possible) to a topic for which you know the words. (Do not do this to avoid practicing new material, however!)

3) <u>After You Speak</u>

evaluate your performance

- Reward yourself with positive self-talk for completing the task. Give yourself a personally meaningful reward for a particularly good performance.
- Evaluate how well the activity was accomplished (Did you complete the task, achieve the purpose, accomplish the goal? If not, what will you do differently next time?)
- Identify the problem areas.
- Share with peers and instructors (ask for and give feedback, share learning strategies).
- Be aware of others' thoughts and feelings.

plan for future tasks

- Plan for how you will improve for the next time.
- Look up vocabulary and grammar forms you had difficulty remembering.
- Review the strategies checklist to see what you might have forgotten.
- Ask for help or correction.
- Work with proficient users of the target language.
- Keep a learning log (document strategies used and task outcomes, find out what works for you).